



King County

Ron Sims

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July 29, 2005

Councilmember Larry Phillips, Chair
King County Council
516 Third Avenue, Room 1200,
Seattle, Washington 98104-3272

Dear Council Chair Phillips,

In April of 2005, I formed the Independent Task Force on Elections and charged them with developing a set of short and long-term recommendations that would have a meaningful and enduring positive impact on the elections process in King County. The Task Force consisted of people with diverse backgrounds, interests, training and political perspectives, and included several widely respected elections professionals. The ultimate goal of the task force was to restore public trust in King County's election system not only by improving it, but by building a secure foundation for King County to have a model elections system for the nation.

This week, the Task Force delivered their final Report and Recommendations to me. I want to thank the Task Force members for their time and hard work. I appreciate the Task Force's thoughtful examination of the issues, and I appreciate their candor. They gave us the frank assessment we wanted as we work to restore public confidence in King County elections, and delivered a set of smart, targeted recommendations. In short, I intend to embrace the reforms proposed by the Task Force. Therefore, I am writing to you today to announce that I will translate the recommendations into a package of action items for implementation which I will send to the Council upon your return from summer recess. The package will include:

- Creation of a "turnaround" team that reports directly to and is accountable to the King County Executive.
- Legislation adopting the recommendations of the Task Force.
- A motion adopting a State Legislative Agenda related to election reform actions that must be taken by the State.

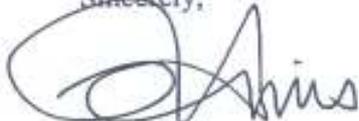


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Finally, the Independent Task Force stated that "in the longer term", they believe a public discussion and debate over the proposal of moving to a separately elected official with primary responsibility for elections is a worthy effort. I agree both with their sequencing and suggestion to engage in a public discussion. Therefore, once the turnaround team has completed its work and the elections department is on a surer footing, I intend to initiate a serious and thoughtful discussion about an elected auditor. Next year, as required by the King County Charter, I will be reconvening the Charter Review Commission and the issue of an elected auditor should be one of the issues the Commission examines.

In the cover letter that accompanied the Task Force Report and Recommendations, Task Force members stated: "After devoting hundreds of hours to this work, we deeply appreciate what a solemn public trust it is to guarantee and protect the most powerful of all civic rights, the right to vote. We anchored all our deliberations on the powerful ideal that every vote does indeed count. This ideal, we believe, is at the heart of our democracy, and must be restored and sustained for the people of King County and all citizens of the state." I couldn't agree more. I urge the County Council to join me in taking action to embrace the Task Force Recommendations which I believe will help us achieve our goal of having one of the best election departments in the nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Sims". The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial "R" and a cursive "Sims".

Ron Sims
King County Executive

cc: King County Councilmembers
Members of The Independent Task Force on Elections